



June 22, 2023

Dear Governor Shapiro:

We write today to express our unwavering opposition to the creation of yet another state voucher program that diverts limited state resources to private schools while 1.7 million public school students are systematically denied their constitutional right to attend a public school that has sufficient resources to offer them a quality education.

Of course, we are aware that during your campaign you expressed publicly your willingness to use state funds to give some parents the option of enrolling their children in private and parochial schools. In fact, the Commonwealth already enables \$340 million for private school vouchers. Despite the enormity of this school voucher program, neither you nor any state lawmakers know if these vouchers are offering any student a quality education or boosting their educational outcomes. At a minimum, before a second and redundant voucher program is established, the taxpayers deserve to know if the notion of private schools as a “lifeline” really holds water.

Just yesterday, in rejecting the legislative leaders’ motion for post-trial relief, Judge Cohn Jubelirer said, “having faced the “formidable challenge” given to the Court by the Supreme Court head on, this Court now tasks Respondents with the challenge of delivering a system of public education that the Pennsylvania Constitution requires – one that provides for every student to receive a meaningful opportunity to succeed academically, socially, and civically, which requires that all students have access to a comprehensive, effective, and contemporary system of public education.”

As this budget process enters its final stage, we urge you to heed this sound guidance from the court and devote all available state resources to meeting your constitutional obligation to the hundreds of thousands of public school students who are desperately trying to learn in under-resourced schools. In fact, you eloquently made a dramatic call to action along these lines in your inaugural address, “That only by setting the table of opportunity and inviting all to sit and partake can we advance the cause of real freedom. The kind of real freedom that comes when we devote real resources to that young child’s public school to make sure she has a shot.”

In closing, you committed to act to make that real freedom, real, when you told the voters that you would solve the public education funding crisis BEFORE you enact programs that give a very small share of parents the choice of sending their children to private or religious education. This budget process is a test of that promise, a test met by rejecting a second voucher program and by demonstrating that you passed a budget that directed all available resources to give every public school student a shot.

Sincerely,

Members of the PA Schools Work Campaign, including:

412 Justice	Education Voters of Pennsylvania	Public Interest Law Center
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